

## Oconto County

### Elijah Spencer

Although he was born in Kentucky (on March 12, 1900), Elijah spent most of his life in Wisconsin. At the age of 24 he left Kentucky for Laona, Wisconsin to work as a logger. He went back to Kentucky briefly to marry Esther Cable. They raised eight children in Laona where Elijah worked for the Connor Lumber Company. After seven years, they moved to Suring and started to farm and raise cattle. They retired in 1972. Esther died in 1994 after 66 years of marriage. Today, Elijah has 21 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. He attributes his long life to hard work. He has always said, "Laugh a lot, pray a lot, and trust in the Lord."

*"The big changes in farming came when we went from horses to tractors, milking cows by hand to milking machines, and getting the milk hauled to the factory in refrigerated trucks."*

Elijah Spencer

### Frieda Taylor

Frieda Schneider was born in Gillett on November 5, 1901. Her parents had come here from Eastern Europe. After schooling, Frieda worked as a secretary to two attorneys in Kenosha. In 1939, she married Harvey Taylor, a conductor on a Northwestern Railroad passenger train. When he retired, they bought a home on Padlock Lake, near Salem. After Harvey's death in 1962, Frieda went back to work for the attorneys she had worked for when she was young. When she retired, she moved to Oconto Falls.

## Oneida County

### Hannah Hokansson Larson

Born on May 29, 1894 in Sweden, Hannah was 18 when she came to America. She had booked passage on the Titanic but changed to another ship to travel with a friend. Hannah recalls, "When we got to Chicago we heard that the Titanic had sunk." Five years later, Hannah married Edwin Larson. They had three children and were married for 47 years until Edwin's death in 1964.

Hannah never visited a doctor until 1997 when she was 103. She was diagnosed with a tumor that was surgically removed. Her daughter relates: "Mother had her own remedies. To stave off a cold she would pour three shots of *Early Times* (whiskey), lie down and drink all three glasses. After two nights of this, the cold would be gone. Otherwise, she never drank."

Hannah continues to crochet but cannot follow the intricate patterns she once completed. At her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, her Swedish relatives came to celebrate and at her 105<sup>th</sup> birthday, they returned.

## Outagamie County

### **Theresa Behling**

Theresa was born on May 22, 1897 in Darboy to a farm family of 14 children. At the age of 12 she did childcare, cooking and cleaning for families in the area. The farm is still in her family, occupied by a nephew.

Theresa remembers going on dates in a horse and buggy and that the family used lanterns for light and wood for cooking and heat. She married Raymond Behling in 1920 and raised nine children. Although Theresa needs more help these days, she enjoys playing sheepshead, crocheting and watching videos of old musicals. She often phones Appleton and chats with her sister who is 95.

## Ozaukee County

### **Thomas Michael Didier**

Born on March 8, 1901 in Port Washington, Tom attended a one-room school, then went on to high school. In 1933 he enrolled in a five-year night course at Milwaukee Vocational School. In 1937 he graduated from the Evening Technical Engineering Division. After World War II, Tom went to work for the Wisconsin Electric Power Company and then worked for Wisconsin Bell, laying the first underground cable from Sun Prairie to Madison.

In his youth, Tom enjoyed playing baseball. At age 65 he took up bowling and averaged 145, playing three times a week. He continued to play well into his 90s. He also is interested in antique cars and owned two Model A Fords – a 1928 two-door and a 1930 coupe with a rumble seat. His interests in history, science and politics continue today.

### **Dela Huettmann**

Born on a farm in New Holstein on December 14, 1900, Dela had seven siblings. She completed high school and went to work in Milwaukee. After she married Peter Huettmann in 1927, they moved to Port Washington where Dela worked in the Ozaukee County Courthouse as a Deputy Clerk of Courts while Peter was the sheriff. “We had no children and lived at the jail where we took care of the prisoners. Our home was in the front of the prison. Sometimes there was only one prisoner. I did all the cooking, no matter how many prisoners we had. There was no menu, I just cooked whatever I wanted to.” She adds, “I kept the prisoners in line.”

Dela’s hobbies include knitting, cooking and baking, shopping, dancing, gardening, and listening to church music.

## Pepin County

### **Ann Bauer**

"I thank God for my wonderful husband and family," said Ann when she celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was born on November 23, 1899 in a log cabin in Plum City. In 1920, she married Tom Bauer, and they farmed for most of their married life. When Tom got sick, they moved to Arkansaw. During World War II, Ann was the town postmistress. She remembers the day World War I ended. They were on their way to Durand in a horse and buggy to see Ann's father. "Buggies kept passing us – people were going to Durand to celebrate the end of the war. We were mystified by the rush." Ann loves to reminisce with friends about the "good old days."

## Pierce County

### **Mabel Heacox**

On September 17, 1999, Mabel celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by singing "Great is Thy Faithfulness" at a party given in her honor. The former choir member still has a strong voice. Mabel misses her sister, Agnes, who lived with her since 1977 and died three years ago at the age of 99.

As a young woman, Mabel worked in Ellsworth at the Hotel Lane. In recent years, she has taken up bowling which she enjoys and does "just for the fun of getting together to play with the leagues." Always an avid reader, Mabel does less of it now. On being 100, she says, "My health is good but I never thought I'd live this long."

### **Anna Johnson**

Born on June 11, 1900 in River Falls, Anna was the daughter of Frank Hrdini, who had come to America from Czechoslovakia when he was 16. He had married Anna Pechacek of Pierce County. They had three daughters and the family stayed in Pierce County all their lives. Anna married Louis Johnson and had two children, Eugene and Carol Ann Krech. Louis died in 1973. Anna lives quietly today in good health.

### **Katherine Larson**

Katherine was born in Cady Township outside Spring Valley on August 8, 1901. She talks fondly of her family and her youth. In 1922 she married Benny Larson and had two children. Benny died in 1934. Katherine remarried, but says, "It was a short marriage."

Katherine worked at various jobs to help support her family. She also rented out rooms in her home. Today, she is still active and enjoys visiting with friends.

## Pierce County

## **Mary Reitz**

"When I was 92 I broke my hip and I still didn't feel old," said Mary when asked when she first thought of herself as old. Born on December 21, 1899 in Arkansaw, Mary is still waiting to feel old, even as she plays cards and bakes.

Mary remembers her childhood: the childless aunt and uncle whom she often visited, and the garter snake that would crawl out from under the front porch and help her eat her afternoon bread and butter snack.

Mary married a neighbor, Edwin Reitz, in 1918 and had four daughters. They farmed in the Morton Hill area until Edwin's death in 1936. Mary then went to work at the A. O. Smith plant making airplane parts. After the war, she worked as a cook in a senior home in Elmwood until she retired at 62. Her advice on becoming a centenarian: "Eat right, sleep, take care of, but don't baby yourself," she laughs.

## **Louise Thalacker**

Born near Mondovi on August 21, 1895, Louise married a farmer and lived in that area until retirement. She then moved to Eau Claire and later to Durand. She became friends with Lurena Richardson and found they shared a love of dolls. Lou has always enjoyed playing the organ and making quilts. She also likes growing African violets. With no children of her own, she is especially fond of nephews John and Tom Fagerland and their families.

## **Polk County**

### **Bessie Green**

Born on July 25, 1899 in St. Croix Falls, Bessie and her family moved to Osceola in 1907. Although she has lived in other places, Osceola has always been her home base. After graduation from high school, Bessie went to St. Paul to attend the Globe Business College. She then taught business subjects at high school and college levels. After graduating from Hastings College in Nebraska, for the next 27 years she worked in the admissions office of Rockford College. She also worked in a law office and for an accountant.

Bessie recalls meeting Helen Keller and riding in an open plane over Washington, D.C. in 1929. She has endowed Osceola's public library and funded three scholarships awarded yearly to Osceola high school seniors. Bessie's motivation for giving is: "Osceola is a beautiful town and as long as you live here, you should work for it."

## **Portage County**

### **Eva Bade-Olson**

Born in the Town of Rose on July 6, 1896, Eva attended a rural school. She married Hanford Olson in 1916; they settled on a 120-acre farm near Rose. After 20 years, Eva was left a widow with seven children. She gave up the farm and moved to Wild Rose to raise her family.

In 1941 she moved to Milwaukee where she worked at St. Francis Hospital until her retirement in 1965. She has lived in Stevens Point ever since.

Eva was president of the local Townsend organization in Stevens Point and a member during the 1930s when she lived in Wild Rose. The Townsend Plan was a forerunner of our present Social Security system.

Today, Eva enjoys visits from her children and their families.

### **Agnes Louise Meyer**

Agnes' parents emigrated from Germany to the Weyauwega area where they raised 11 children on a farm. Agnes was born on November 25, 1897. Growing up on a farm meant having few toys ? a favorite place to play was a sand pile near the barn. Christmas presents were an apple or an orange and a small bag of peanuts. Agnes attended a German Lutheran parochial school in Weyauwega, six miles away. She stayed during the week with an older sister who lived in town.

In her late teens Agnes left the farm and went to Oshkosh with a younger sister to work as domestics. She met her husband Henry at a dance. After marrying, they lived with his parents in Oshkosh. Henry became a funeral director and owned Meyer Funeral Home on Algoma Boulevard in Oshkosh. They raised two boys who entered the business after serving in World War II. Agnes is not as active as she once was but promises to show everyone how to plow the garden in the spring.

### **Sigert Nelson**

Sigert was born on August 31, 1900 in Illinois; the family moved to Minnesota shortly after. When Sigert was 16 he worked on the Great Northern Railroad in Montana. He then worked on the Soo Line in Stevens Point until he retired at age 65. Sigert was a pioneer in early railroading. He worked on steam engines and saw the change to diesels – he was a fireman and then became an engineer. Sigert attends the monthly Retired Railroad Association breakfasts held in Stevens Point for retired Soo employees.

Sigert married Lydia Carolyn Gripkentrog who died in 1998 at the age of 96. They had five children; there are now many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sigert has always been very focused on politics and world events. He believes one stays young by being interested. He keeps up on what all the children in the family are doing.

## **Portage County**

### **Arnold Wendorf**

“Lucky for me, one of Arnie’s favorite pastimes is talking,” says his great-granddaughter Karla Disbrow who has written many stories about Arnie’s life. Born on December 29, 1900 in Schofield, Arnie grew up there.

Arnie married the “girl next door,” Hertha Disher. They have a daughter, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Arnie worked at the Rothschild paper mill for almost 50 years. He loved golf and baseball and played both throughout his life. He and Hertha enjoyed camping and fishing together.

## Price County

### Tom McCall

Tom was born in Ashland on December 20, 1900. He was orphaned at the age of nine. He delivered newspapers in Ashland until he was 17. He then moved to Park Falls where he bought a bowling alley and billiard room with the money he had saved. He had to lie about his age as he was too young to own property. His payments were \$75 per month. Some time later, Tom bought a large building and remodeled it into retail stores, doctors’ offices and three apartments.

Tom married, and he and Ellen would go for an afternoon ride on Sundays, have dinner at a fine restaurant, and then, as he says, “dance the evening away, as was the custom in the 1950s.” Since his wife’s death, Tom lives near the downtown area and is always ready to share a tale with anyone interested in “the good old days.”

## Racine County

### Gerda Morton

More than 110 years ago, on January 11, 1890, Gerda Jonsson was born in Osby, Skane, Sweden. When she was 14 years old she left for America and settled in Chicago where she had relatives. She lived with them and had various jobs. In 1916 she married another Swede, Arvid Morton, who worked as a mason. In 1917 Gerda gave birth to twin girls; one died in the flu epidemic. Gerda loved to cook for company - she seemed to have unlimited energy.

Gerda, Arvid and Helen returned to Sweden for three visits. They sponsored many people immigrating to the United States. Arvid trained them in his construction business. After Arvid’s death in 1961, Gerda moved to Milwaukee and Racine to be near her daughter and granddaughter.

## Racine County

### **Sr. Cordula Neu**

Of her 100 years, 80 have been as a Dominican nun in Racine. Born on June 20, 1899, the second in a family of 10 in Neosho, Sister Cordula is an accomplished musician who plays the piano, violin and accordion, composes music and is also a teacher. "I loved teaching music; my students were delightful," she notes and adds, "I still keep in touch with many of them."

Sr. Cordula wanted to enter the church from the time she was four or five. After entering the convent in 1916, she taught first and second grades at St. Bernard's in Madison. She had learned to play the organ as a youngster and in 1924, she started to study piano and violin at UW-Madison and finished a master's degree at DePaul University in Chicago. For 20 years she was choir and music director at the motherhouse in Racine.

Retired now, Sr. Cordula says, "I still feel vigorous and energetic. My convent life has been one long session of joy."

## **Richland County**

### **Gladys Briggs**

Gladys was born on December 20, 1901 in a log house in rural Bear Creek in Crawford County. She attended a one-room school that was barely heated by a wood stove. Gladys remembers the three-mile walk to church, the barrel butter churn, and the washboard, and that some families didn't have even a washboard.

Gladys married Beauford Briggs and they had one daughter. When she was grown, they all worked at the Badger Ordinance. Gladys thinks that her life was most enjoyable when she lived in Orion and taught her grandchildren how to fish in the Wisconsin River. She has been living in Richland Center for the past 26 years.

### **Herb E. Schnadt**

I was born on September 7, 1900. The one person who affected me the most was my childhood sweetheart. When I was 18 years old, I wrote a poem for my sweetheart in which I showed my feelings. When I proposed, she accepted.

After high school I worked as a bookkeeper at an implement company and earned \$100 a month. I wanted to earn more so I went to work for a bank and was paid \$175. We married in 1924. I stayed in banking, retiring in 1965 as a vice-president. I think falling in love affected my life more than anything else. My advice: "Couples need to work at their relationship and be financially secure before getting married."

## **Rock County**

### **Aizle Siron Dawes**

Born on January 27, 1893 in Lexington, Illinois, Aizle was the first of nine children. She was raised by her grandparents, whom "I loved ? I was their favorite of all the children." Aizle says she lived "a fine life, but simple." Her grandparents operated a fruit farm and Aizle adds "life was just good."

Aizle drove her horse and buggy to school and learned to drive a car when she was in high school. She married Lloyd Dawes, an engineer, when she was 19. They had no children, but helped to raise Aizle's siblings. When Lloyd died in 1962, they had been married 50 years.

### **Virginia Hagaman**

I was born Virginia McCoy on March 31, 1889 in North Carolina. I was raised on a farm with six sisters and four brothers. I married at the age of 16 and had four children.

During World War I, I worked as a seamstress. I have always enjoyed life and the young people I come in contact with. They have kept me young throughout my life. I feel that I have not seen so many changes in my life. The change that I have noticed most is seeing all the farmland that has been sold off.

### **Bessie Kuhl**

Bessie was born in a small logging community in northern Michigan on December 11, 1899. She was 17 when she married Henry Kuhl; they had four children. They moved to Wisconsin and farmed for many years. With a large garden, Bessie says, "We lived off the land during the Depression." They had always farmed with horses and when tractors came in, they quit farming. "Tractors were much too expensive for us," she explains. They moved to Milwaukee where both Bessie and Henry did custodial work for a church. Her advice: "People should be more loving and kind to each other."

### **Fred Linenberg**

Fred was born on October 9, 1897 in Tomah. He remembers that he and his siblings didn't get to play very much when they were growing up, "but worked hard." When he was 15 he ran the threshing machine.

Fred married Lotte in 1919. They had two boys, and he says, "Lotte stayed home with the boys while they were little." When a daughter-in-law took ill, Fred and Lotte moved to Beloit to help her. Fred got a job at Plankey's garage. Lotte died just before their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

In thinking about the changes he has seen, Fred regrets the railroads doing away with most of the passenger trains. He always enjoyed fishing and sports. The Green Bay Packers is his favorite team.

## **Rock County**

### **John Sklavos**



John, who was born on March 22, 1899, came to the United States from Greece when he was 17 years old. He spoke no English and had \$10 in his pocket. He boarded a train for Beloit where he joined a group of men from his hometown who were already settled.

After several jobs, John opened a shoe repair and men's hat steaming business. He married his girl friend, Stametia and they had two sons. Stametia worked at Terry's Restaurant on West Grand Avenue. Her boss invited John into the business. After Terry died, John and Stam ran the restaurant. Later, John opened "John's Steer In" on Liberty and Grant that he operated until his retirement in 1978. John and Stam have been together for 62 years. For years, John was a familiar figure as he walked in the Beloit Mall, greeting people he knew.

### **Mae Thompson**

Twins Mae and Maude Eastman were born on February 4, 1899 on a farm near Evansville. Mae married Wallace Thompson in 1919 and moved to an eight-acre farm nearby. Mae has been on this farm ever since. She cared for the chickens and traded the eggs for groceries in town. After Wallace's death in 1956, Mae rented the land to a neighbor, and she lived in the house.

The worst thing that happened to Mae was losing one of her two sons in World War II. She recalls with great fondness the school that her children and grand-children attended and the wedding parties held at Magnolia Corners. The greatest improvements came with getting running water and electricity – "especially for doing laundry. That was the hardest work ever," she recalls.

## **Rusk County**

### **Ida Johnson**

Born on September 20, 1895 in Cameron, Ida was one of nine children. She remembers not attending school very much. "Our teacher would give us work to do and then put her head down on the desk and sleep. No wonder I didn't learn anything." Christmas meant a chocolate cookie, a great treat. In 1919, Ida married Peter Johnson, a widower with two children. They had three of their own and farmed for the next 20 years until Pete was injured and died.

In 1945, Ida sold the farm and moved to Eau Claire to work as a housekeeper. She retired at the age of 80 and bought a home in Ladysmith. Ida was always known as a kind and generous person, often helping others at home and at church. She loves to crochet, knit, sew and garden.

## **Rusk County**

### **Selma Doers**

Born on August 21, 1899, in Darlington, Selma was the daughter of Pearson and Christina Hanson who were from Sweden. Selma went to school in the Stanley area and then moved to Ladysmith. She married Jesse Doers in 1920. They farmed and had three children, John, Hilda and Edmond. After her own children were grown, Selma cared for other people's children. She enjoyed embroidering, gardening, and playing the piano at nursing homes. She continues to attend church and visit friends and family.

### **Elmer Joyner**

The son of Duane and Jenny Joyner, Elmer was born on December 10, 1898 in the township of Atlanta. In 1923 he married Effie Keely and they had five children. For most of his life, Elmer farmed and logged in the Bruce area. His wife and two daughters have died and three children survive: Dale, Adele and Julie. There are 12 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and seven great-great-grandchildren.

### **Marie Ring**

David and Elizabeth Reichel came to the United States from Russia in 1906. With them was their daughter, Marie, born on October 13, 1900. Their ship landed in Galveston, Texas; the Reichels moved north, ending up in Wisconsin.

In 1936 Marie married George Ring. They had two children. Today there are six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Marie prides herself on her independence. She claims, "I can still do ten sit-ups, I take no medication, and I can walk uptown." She adds, "Every night I ask the Lord, 'Are you ready for me yet?' In the morning, I say, 'I guess not yet.' "

## **St. Croix County**

### **Sadie Hartwig**

Born on October 3, 1896 in Nebraska, Sadie had three brothers. In 1912, the family moved to Minnesota. In 1917, Sadie and Harold Hartwig were married. They had three children and farmed until 1925 when they moved to Milltown, Wisconsin where they farmed until the mid-1930s.

In 1947, Sadie and Harold moved to Bruce where they operated a hardware store with Harold's brother-in-law. In 1949, they moved to Prentice and purchased a grocery store that they operated until 1964. They then retired to Milltown. Sadie bought an apartment there in 1975 after Harold died.

## **St. Croix County**

### **Ellen Nygaard**

Ellen was born on August 26, 1897 in Norway. Her family moved to Canada, then to Minnesota and Wisconsin. Ellen attended a country school until the fifth grade, then helped on the family farm and cleaned houses. She married Gust Nygaard in 1917 and they had two sons. Both sons served in World War II. Ellen has always enjoyed doing fancy needlework, crocheting and cross-stitch embroidery. She enjoys visits from all the children in the family.

### **Margaret Olson**

Born on December 25, 1900 in Minneapolis, Margaret was the daughter of Norwegian immigrants. When she was four, the family moved to Wisconsin and bought a farm near Baldwin. Margaret married Martin Olson in 1922. They had no children but were very close to nieces and nephews.

Margaret worked for many years at Rosen's and Keith's Café in Baldwin. She tells of opening a crate of bananas and finding a tarantula lurking in the box. After Martin's death, Margaret went to St. Paul where she worked at the St. Paul Women's Club catering luncheons, teas and receptions. Margaret traveled after retiring and then settled in Baldwin. She advises everyone to "see and enjoy this great country."

### **Daisy Plottner**

Daisy was born in 1899 near Downing. Her father bought the hotel in Downing; her mother kept a cow in the community pasture just outside of town. Daisy graduated from high school where she was a top basketball player. She attended River Falls Normal School and then taught school. Neither Daisy nor her sister Effie married. They stayed at home and cared for their bedridden father. They also "mothered" many nieces and nephews – the family children, from toddlers to teens, and anywhere from two to ten at a time were welcomed for a day or a week and were always loved and fed.

### **Helen Solberg**

The family tomboy and wit, Helen was born on September 3, 1898 in Minnesota. She attended Central High School and Rasmussen Business College in St. Paul. She married Arnold Solberg in 1927 and they had three children.

When Arnold retired, the couple moved to a lake home in Minnesota for the summers and went to the Southwest for the winters. After Arnold's death, Helen lived in St. Paul and then moved to Baldwin, Wisconsin.

## **Sauk County**

### **Anna Frey**

I was born on November 17, 1897 in the town of Berry in Dane County. After I was born, we moved to Martinsville where my parents operated a store and tavern. I worked at the store and later as a maid for a boarding house. When I was 18, I met my future husband but I wasn't interested in marriage at that time. George Frey waited for me for seven years until 1923, when we married and moved to Roxbury. We raised ten children and had 55 years of a happy marriage. I am in good health and have many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. They all live either in Sauk City or Roxbury.

### **George Schenck**

Born on July 17, 1899 at Hyde Mills, George had three brothers and two sisters. From the age of 12 he worked for several farmers in the Baraboo area. He attended Baraboo High School and Lake Forest College in Illinois.

George married Esther Stoner who died of cancer many years ago. They had two daughters. After college, George worked for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad until his retirement. He spent his summers at his cottage on Lake Augustine near Glidden. George always loved to fish. He never smoked or drank and attributes his long life to his relaxing summers on the lake. He has oatmeal every morning and enjoys eating a hearty meal three times a day.

### **Ella Anna Groth**

I was born on November 29, 1896, the same year McKinley became president. We lived on a farm near Prairie du Sac. When I was seven I was hired out to help care for four little boys. As a teenager I was a servant in Baraboo.

After marrying Henry Groth, we moved to a farm on the Baraboo Bluffs where we lived for 38 years and had five children. I recall hiding with the children in our root cellar as the cyclone of 1918 roared overhead, destroying our barn.

During the Great Depression we lived off the land. Our meat was wild game that I cooked and canned with vegetables we grew and fruit from our orchard. Harry trapped and I skinned and stretched the pelts that we sold. I peddled apples door-to-door. During the early 1940s we saw from our hill the land transformed into the Badger Ordinance Works. Later, I worked there.

We were the first to have television in 1948. Howdy Doody was the kids' favorite; Ted Mack's Amateur Hour brought the older folks. In 1954 we still had to call Central to place a telephone call – the same decade the Russians sent up Sputnik. My pleasure now is being with all my family.

## **Sawyer County**

### **Emma Riemer**

Born on October 30, 1900 in Athens (WI), Emma spent her childhood on a farm. She learned all the skills of a farm wife that she would use after marrying a farmer, Walter Riemer. While they were growing up, Emma's brother made a bowling alley in the barn including handmade pins and balls. He also made baseball bats – many games were played on that farm. Emma taught herself to play an accordion “by ear” and this was a happy addition to any neighborhood party. Emma also became expert at making patch quilts that were sold at church bazaars.